

My Christmas Tree



TAYLOR



My Christmas Tree

By
Mabel Cecilia Taylor



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MABEL CECILIA TAYLOR



TO MY MOTHER

Through heat and cold and dusty weather
We journeyed in this world together.
We ate and slept, took time to pray,
Worked hard at tasks that came our way,
And then spare time I would betray
To write a lay, from day to day,
With quill from a wild goose feather.
Some rhymes were glad,
Some rhymes were sad,
But ever, always, ever bad,
The worst, no doubt, you ever had—
Stale as the rain-soaked mountain heather,
Or dry as any old shoe leather.

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INTRODUCTORY

The oceans cover coral strands
And hills their hoard of gold;
An oyster hides its milky pearl
While rocks gay gems enfold.

Just as your eyes are bright and clear
But mirror not your soul,
Your words are wise, but of your mind
They never speak the whole.

Thus I compose my simple rhymes
That only part reveal,
For I must never, never, write
Quite all I know and feel.

I sing my lays like seashells cast
Adrift upon the sand,
To take, or leave, just as you wish,
And I shall understand.

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MABEL CECILIA TAYLOR

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My Christmas Tree

MY CHRISTMAS TREE

A tree without my study window stands,
Of stately mien,
Arrayed with snow in plumes of purest white,
With sparkling sheen.
A recent snowfall on a green fir tree
Is sight sublime;
It rivals all the other types of trees,
At any time.

It rivals apple trees with blossoms pink,
In Maytime sweet;
The orchard trees all hung with luscious fruit
Cannot compete;
And graceful willows, oaks, and royal palms,
Have beauty rare,
But surely with my snow-crowned Douglas fir
Cannot compare.



BITTERSWEET

I hear the bells of Elfland sweetly chiming,
While rosy beams illumine the realm of fame.
My silver ship, unseen, is swiftly gliding
Adown that crystal stream that bears no name.

I've tuned my ear to some far-distant cadence,
Sensed yearnings in my heart I could not rout,—
Ambition which is past mankind's explaining,
Though tinged with bitterness of mortals' doubt.

I've set my sails for those yon mystic places,
With compass, chart, the Muse has loaned to me.
The cargo will be verse, disclosing efforts
To anchor in the Port of Poesy.

Then on a scented, sunny, opal morning,
The land of rhyme and rhythm my feet will tread,
Through dewy fields with diamond-beaded grasses,
Where my true Love will greet me and be wed.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Silver! Silver!

The world is all silver!

The moon with a wand has be-silvered the night

Where pine trees are fringed with gay prisms of frosting,
And snow is a drapery of silvery tulle,

While rime on the fences and idle park benches
Is tinsel be-decking the city for Yule.

Silver! Silver!

The world is all silver!

'Mid silver-tipped stars and a silver-girt moon,

The angels with wings all of crystal and silver
Will glide down the moonbeams when dreams have begun—

Will bless every lintel, each sock by the mantel,
Ere silver is fused in the gold of the sun.



WINTER

The bell sounds muffled from the schoolhouse tower,
And muted, too, the milkman's early horn,
As through tall drifts his old horse trudges firm,
And cuts a path for me this frosty morn.

We gazed but yesterday on piebald roofs,
Dry, stubbled fields, a littered market place,
Bare trees black-etched upon a wind-swept sky,
And saw wild Autumn leaves with sparrows race.

How oft the land is snow-robed in the night,
By master hand, when we no vigil keep,
And hamlets cuddle white and soft and still,
Like sinless babes in blankets, fast asleep!

Could that the Dove of Peace with white wings spread,
Soar through the dark of doubt and fear and pain,
Enfold mankind in love's embrace. and calm
The tortured heart of this world once again.

KITTENS

Three kittens in a basket lay,
A brown, a black, a Maltese gray.

Son George admired the one of brown,
With fur as soft as thistle down,
Great yellow eyes, and whiskers long,
Because it purred a tenor song.

Now Celia chose the green-eyed gray
For it was frisky all the day;
It scratched and bit and hissed and spat,
But she preferred a spunky cat.

To Gwen was left the wee black one.
She said her cat would be such fun . . .
It would get dirty, but, (alack!)
You never need to wash a black.

Three kittens in a basket lay,
But now I've given all away.

THE PRAIRIE TEACHER

A log school on the prairie wide,
A little cabin close beside
 A reedy slough,
An old car and a dog, Kildare,
My book shelves and my fire-side chair,
 A friend or two,
Is all I took in Life's great stride,
And now, no matter what betide,
 I am content.
Fame's pinnacle I did not reach;
My destiny seemed but to teach—
 It was my bent.
If through the years they came to me,
My pupils, and I helped them be
 Honest and strong —
Helped them their future lives to plan,
The good and bad in life to scan,
 To shun the wrong,
And can with pride their lives relate,
Show them renowned in stations great,
 I am repaid.
And God I thank for life in me,
Though but a teacher it may be,
 That I was made.

DAWN ON OAHU

'Tis dawn, and 'cross this far-flung tropic isle
The eerie winds of morning haunt and chill.
Great scarves of mist wreathe every vine-clad hill
Like serpents sly, who would their prey beguile.
Tall swishing palms are ghouls that whisper vile,
And black ravines hide phantom forms from me.
That red sun dyes like blood the turquoise sea
Which moans where coral reefs its calm must rile.

As scent of fruit steams high from dew-drenched earth
Tired sampans trail their course 'tween scarlet buoys.
Then docks are strewn with gory fish, and noise
When orange-legged mynahs start their raucous mirth.
A mission bell clangs loud the hour to pray,
And gives to Oahu another day.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(March 15, 1889 and March 15, 1939.)

I little deemed that some time I should be
On hallowed ground that knew your footsteps well,—
That to Sans Souci I should come to dwell
And dream adventure by a turquoise sea.
Beneath the selfsame palms of Waikiki,
Inspire this would-be bard in tropic dell,—
Entreat the Muse to leave her secret cell
And to the realm of rhyme give me the key.

Where yon aged banyan lends its cool shade still,
"Master of Ballantrae" you penned, no less.
Within this house, perchance, your spirit will
Linger, benign, to counsel and to bless.
While at Samoa, on a sun-kissed hill,
In placid sleep you rest now, R. L. S.

NOTE: Written in Honolulu March 15, 1939.

It is fifty years ago today since Robert Louis Stevenson registered in Honolulu. His step-daughter speaks of him as "R. L. S."

IN HAWAII

Dear little black babies come fast tumbling out
From quaint little houses that cluster about,
As through lanes a-winding I lazily trail,
By rainbow-spanned mountains and fern-covered dale.

The blossoms entice me, blue, crimson and gold,
Their perfumes enchant me like potions of old.
A waterfall's ripple, a cardinal's song,
Unite to inebriate all the day long.

I love the sweet plaint from the ukuleles
And loiter in shade of the beautiful trees,—
The banyan, palm, ironwood or monkey-pod rare,
To eat a banana, papaya or pear.

Each wave holds a thrill as it beckons to me
From turquoise and jade in the spread of the sea.
By warm silver sands I am drugged with delight,
Bewitched by the moon through the soft purple night.



HOMESICK

I am lonesome for the prairie
 With its sage-brush scattered o'er,
For the crimson of its sunsets
 Flaming through my shanty's door.

How I long to see the white peaks
 Of the Rockies in the west,
And the waving of the fox-grass
 Out upon the foot-hills' crest.

Let me hear the wild ducks splashing
 On each reedy little lake,
In the poplar bluff the crying
 Of the coyote to his mate.

I miss all the prairie flowers,
 Miss the meadow-lark's sweet call,
And the fresh caressing breezes
 Of a chinook over all.

I want just to be a cowboy
 On a cayuse in the West.
I am going back to-morrow
 To the place that knows me best.

(Written on the island of Oahu, Southern Pacific.)

LEE'S PLACE

Smells galore, things on the floor,
On walls and on ceiling too,
Hung by strings and copper rings,
Or propped by a dagger or two.

Kegs of fish and roots and swish,
(But principally swish you'd say)
Pop-eyed dolls, pyjamas, shawls,
And many a cloisonné tray.

Shining brass and tinkling glass,
Bewitching, rare porcelaine,
Dragon bowls, incense for souls
En route to celestial plane.

Smiling Lee, with cup of tea,
Greets me at the long day's end
Naught on earth has quite the worth
Of my little old Canton friend.

SPRING ON THE PRAIRIE

A crimson sun is heralding the Spring
With banners bright within cerulean sky.
In wake of silver rain, gay zephyrs high
The spicy scent of buffalo-willows fling.
While meadow-larks angelic vespers sing,
Shy crocuses of palest archil dye
Across the prairie's new green carpet hie,
And o'er each rippled slough the wild-fowl wing.

Through Winter's confine in a northern land
Its forty-five below, I oft resent,
And sigh for Pan with magic saraband,
In world with cerement white so cold and spent;
But Spring's touch on my brow is saintly hand
That shrives me soon of sin from discontent.

TO MY BABY

Would it not be awful
To be a busy bee,
And never, never, in the world
A honeyed flower to see,

Or be a princely duck,
That proudly loves to swim,
Find all the lakes, both near and far,
Some drouth had drained for him?

Would it not be awful
To live my whole life through,
And never have to smile at me
A little son like you?

THE HOUSEHOLD GOD OF HAPPINESS

(Rondel)

That pagan god on the mantel there,
With shaven head, and a roguish grin
On fat old face with a dimpled chin,
Is wondrous rare. from a Chinese Fair.

A robe embroidered he deigns to wear,
Some lotus blooms, carnelian pin,
That pagan god on the mantel there,
With shaven head and a roguish grin.

He holds sway there in the fire's red flare
As incense curls from his mouth within,
In ancient rite as in learned Peking,
While low he squats on his feet both bare,
That pagan god on the mantel there,
With shaven head and a roguish grin.

AMBITION

Esteem, acclaim, applause are dear
When to a hero lent,
But just to know he reached the goal
Should give his heart content.

There is a peak I fain would reach
Atop a rugged mount,
There is a draught I fain would quaff
From out a gleaming fount.

We do not leap to heights of fame
But toiling climb, I know.
Ambition's hill is rough and steep,
Adverses make it slow.

Our God would have the apple ripe
When man would pluck it green.
He who withholds the plough and seed
Will not a harvest glean.

Thus we who seek success in life
In leisure cannot bask.
Each man who did a thing of worth
Has sweated at his task.

THE FELODESE.

So white, so cold, so still,
One scintillating star,
A splash of red above a hill,
A wolf's cry from afar!

The shanty's frosted panes
Stream forth no shaft of light;
No welcome smoke curls straight and high
Into the Arctic night.

Alone, bereft, distraught,
Victim of hopes denied
His radio had told to him
The one beloved had died.

AN ARMENIAN'S TRIBUTE TO CANADA

Just as a mother on whose breast
Is calmed a wounded child to rest,
Thou art indeed,—
So swift to soothe all grief and fear,
With love to wipe each bitter tear,
And teaching faith to heeding ear,
Shelter in need.

Adopted country thou are fair,
Thee God has blessed beyond compare
Where'er man roams.
Here men can dare to do the right,
Where winds are pure and sunshine bright,
While peace and love make spirits light
In tranquil homes.

Vast hills thou hast, great lakes and streams
Gigantic far beyond one's dreams,
Rich forest lands,
Fish, fruit and game on which to feed,
Warm raiment cheap for those in need,
While fertile soil to till and seed
Waits willing hands.

I'll sing my thanks while I have breath,
And when at last I'm mute in death
In future days,
Could that my pen have left behind
Verse to extol the haven kind
Vouchsafed to me—Armenian hind.—
In hymns of praise.

AT SUNSET

Be-colored sunsets are a frequent quest,
When Nature spills her paint box in the west,
For artists stand enraptured at the view,
And marvel at each interchanging hue.

But I would draw the blind, refuse to see
When parting Day flaunts her gay flags at me
To mock me with the past. I must, for one,
Prefer an eastern sky, with rising sun.

I held a dying child up to my breast
One autumn eve, with crimson-flooded west,
And setting sun I never more shall see,
But what I hear her plaintive call to me.

LITTLE LACE MITTENS

A puzzle you see, has travelled to me,—
These little black mitts of finest silk lace,
Found hidden within the quaintest old case,
When boldly I turned a little gold key
To fathom, perchance, this new legacy.
Great-grandfather prized his carved wooden case,
But who owned the mitts of scented black lace?—
A sweetheart maybe, away o'er the sea,—

Some lady so fair, with wig of white hair,
A collar of lace and cameo pin,
Blue ruffled gown of be-flowered muslin
Who danced with him there, her beau of fair hair.
I'll cherish the mitts, those little hands wore,—
Love token of yore from far-away shore.

MY SON

He kissed me, smiled, and waved his hand,
"I'll soon be back," he said.

.
They wrote me they had carried him
And laid him 'mong the dead.
Should soldier boys sleep long and deep
Within their Flanders bed?
My rebel heart throughout long years
Has felt my son was near.
His kiss is warm upon my lips,
His voice I yet can hear.

I hear it in the city street
As busy throngs push by,
Or out in meadows cool and green
Where peaceful cattle lie.
I hear it in the ocean's surf
And on each windy hill,
'Mid gleaners in the harvest fields,
Or woodlands dark and still.

.
He kissed me, smiled, and waved his hand,
"I'll soon be back," he said.

*DAPHNE

Dear Daphne, I have envied thee of late
The solace of thy laurel's enfolding arms,
Sacred from man, immune to grief and hate,
While shielded on its breast from all alarms.
So, warmed by sun, or bathed in silver rain
And redolent of spicy scent, aware
That naught, through moon-lit nights, but zephyrs fain
Would kiss thy cheek and toss thy tresses fair.

A poincianna I should choose to be,
In far Hawaii, on some mossy slope,
And shed my scarlet petals toward the sea,—
My tears of blood for death and vanished hope.
Thus Greek, or other, long from peace estranged,
Might plead that to some tree he could be changed.

* In Greek mythology Daphne was changed into a cassia laurel tree to escape the attentions of Apollo.

TRAITORS

I loathe their perfidy, their lying lips,
The flushing cheek and half-averted eye.
For shame they cannot look you in the face
Nor openly assert their fancied case.

I dare a cross—thorns—nails—the scourge.
But grant there be no sneaking Judas nigh,
With leering face and vile disloyalty,
If I must climb the hill of Calvary.

COLOR

I once planted seeds and roots in the sun,
By the breeze and rain to be wooed and won,
And now could you see my garden so fair,
You would praise the things that are growing there.

No legerdemain of mine is the birth
Of these bright-hued buds from the dull, black earth --
Such wonderful blooms with sweetest perfume,
And the ones with honey my bees consume.

The tints and the shades are grouped to compare
With a Persian rug that is spread for prayer,
By dahlias, iris, lilies and phlox,
And the roses, bleeding-hearts, hollyhocks.

Some leave, but are in their places again,
When the Spring comes dancing on silver rain,
And some never answer Autumn's first call,
Like the pansies, zinnias, and asters tall.

Thus all the year round by color I'm led
From the jonquils' gold to the holly's red,
And color weaves sorcery holding art
To allay the pain in an aching heart.

A BRIDE I AM

(A Rondeau)

I bride I am, elect, to-day,
Think you my Love will long delay?
Place on my head a floral band,
White lilies in my trembling hand,
For I would be in brides' array.

This groom did woo, as others may. —
Quick searched me out, would not take nay.
Though to escape I oft have planned,
A bride I am.

Those hollow eyes hold me at bay.
His scrawny arms on me he'll lay.
Sir Death arrives from Shadow Land,
And I must seek at his demand
My bridal bed, in church-yard gray.
A bride I am.

*KEY WEST

Florida keys, fair isles of ease,
That one by one
Like beads upon a ribbon strung
Far out the southern sea are flung!
A longing comes once in a while
To bask a time on sea-girt isle,
In tropic sun,
When tasks are done.

A string of isles that stretch for miles
All in a row,—
Weed-strewn sands with tawny ledges,
Green fringed palms and ochre sedges,
Sequestered nooks and mystic dells
Adrift with opal-tinted shells
The tides bestow,
From depths below.

Jessamine pale on shelving shale,
Anemonae,
Sea fans of lace so fairy light,
And coral branches rose and white.
While fishes red and gold and blue
Glide silently and swiftly through
The turquoise sea.
From you and me.

Here Sunset pours on Key West shores
Her brightest dye.
Marina Casa waits us there
In drowsy, humid evening air.
Inverted hangs the southern moon.
The lapping waters softly croon
A lullaby,
As sea-birds cry.

* The Florida keys are a long string of islands stretching out into the ocean and all connected by narrow bridges along which a highway runs down to the last key,—Key West.

SOLDIER BOY

"He spared not His own Son. but delivered Him up
for us all." Rom. 8:32.

. . . . She watched that python, long and dun,—
The train,—coil round the hills that mark Whitby,
Hiding within its maw, voraciously,
The dearest thing that God could give, a son.
Alone! Through grief-dimmed eyes she knew no one,
The hand of sympathy she could not see,
But, stumbling sought the trail across prairie,
Until at length the old ranch house she won.

O for his laughing eyes, without a fear,
The merry song, gay steps upon the stairs!
She cannot hear him calling "Mother Dear"
And wonders where he is, and how he fares
To crucify a mother is but naught
If by her sacrifice world peace is wrought.

TO THOSE WHO LOVE ME

Place me in a sheltered cove
Where the idle cannot rove,
Cannot read my age and name,
Wonder at my lack of fame.
Only those who have loved me
Do I wish my grave to see.

Place me by a forest tall
For a kind protective wall,
On a hill-side which the sun
Paints with red when day is done,
Where the moon can send her light
From her journey through the night.

Place a fir tree at my head
Where the birds can go to bed,
And the time will not seem long
If I have their gladsome song.
Do the Dead just lonesome stay
In their crypts till Judgment Day?

Place a pansy on my breast.
(Pansies speak of hearts at rest.)
Loyal friends throughout the past
I shall love you to the last—
Thank you for the happy years
You have given me, my dears.

MARIE

Her life is furled like some old parasol
Which fire will not consume, for steel ribs stay
Like some odd skeleton, 'mong ashes gray,
To haunt her with sweet dreams, bright hopes, and all
That made life gay before the tyrants' thrall.
Who can forget their family . . . okay
When gaolers curse, deride, and say us nay
When we would weep and heroes' names recall?

Her child begot of conquering madman's lust,
Is strong and handsome as his father is.
But grant, my God, to him a noble mind,
A tender heart, and true, that all can trust.
Make him a "Daniel come to judgment", his,
A life revered in annals of mankind.

SPRING

(Rondel.)

As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie.
On rainbow wings she alights as Psyche,
Where violets come shyly peeping.

Each blade and bud at her touch is leaping,
Her smile is greening each hill and lea,
As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie.

Snow-wraiths and icicles fast went weeping
In silver rain from an April sea.
And blue-eyed Life with a kiss will free
Tulips and daffodils for my reaping,
As Spring awakes from her tranquil sleeping,
With robins' carols in Ville Marie.

TO A WANDERER

I wish that I might fairer be for you, dear,
That of each word and act you could not tire,
That you would never, elsewhere, haste to seek the
Companionship and beauty you admire.

Some others deem my face is passing fair, here,
With eagerness request I play and sing,
And other lips smile gay at my repartee,
In other eyes I sense love hovering,

O that my body could hold grace forever,
My speech be arias of music sweet,
That words of counsel, in affection given,
Your wayward soul would heed and be replete.

Could that this home be ever sanctuary
Your nomad feet would seek to be at rest,
With birds and trees, the purling brooks and flowers,
And me to loving serve at each behest.

Then I in anguish would not sleepless lie here,
Or with mad dreams possessed see you, dear one,
With sensuous admiration fondling others,
So far away beneath that southern sun.

EASTER MORNING

Spring is filled with bright new bonnets,
Poets mad with timely sonnets,
And where each cheeky robin trills
Gay tulips flirt with daffodils.

Gray-faced winter fled the prairies,
Scowling at the April fairies,
While who guessed snowdrifts there could screen
Such fragrant beds of tender green?

Deck the fane with many a flower,
Peal the chimes within its tower.
Let youth pretend, this holy morn,
That War is dead and Peace re-born.

TO ADELINE

(April)

I sense the tender, growing things
That hedge the lanes along,
Tune with each joyous bird that sings
Its resurrection song.

I see trees bid their buds expand
Till 'gainst the blue of sky
Is winsome green, by zephyrs fanned,
Where fields and meadows lie.

I know God sends back daffodils,
Primroses, mignonette,
While in a dewy corner spills
The scent of violet.

I wish you, too, could come, Aline,
And walk beside me, dear,
That I might hold your hand in mine,
Your magic laughter hear.

O may your grave be warm and bright
Through April's golden sun,
With valley lilies, fragrant, white,
To blanket you, dear one.

FLIRTATION

(Chain Poetry)

Gay, dainty daffodils
In gowns of frilly yellow,
Be-deck my window-sills
To charm a handsome fellow.

To charm a handsome fellow
Who dwells across the way,
And on a violencello
Enchants me with a lay.

Enchants me with a lay
This windy, snowy weather,
And in my heart to stay
Brings Love and Spring together.

Brings Love and Spring together.
To urge me thus to write,
And ask my neighbor whether
He'll dine with me tonight.

TO-DAY



A roundelay upon the breeze is heard
Of bleating lamb, of bee, and rapturous bird,
While all the air quaffs dewy incense up
From lilac, new-mown grass, and tulip-cup.
No sky was ever bluer than to-day's;
No sun had truer healing in its rays
Than I breathe in, and all my pulses thrill
At spring's fresh kiss on greening dale and hill.
The Gypsy blood must leap in every breast
To follow dancing feet on joyous quest.
Who does not taste of youth with winsome Spring,
And hear the merry chime when blue bells ring,
Or canticle within each singing pine:
"Praise God, mankind, for beauty so divine."

A SPRING GARDEN

Welcome back gay Spring-time
To my garden here!
Chase away chill Winter
With his whiteness drear.
Purple lilacs tossing,
Gray moths fluttering o'er,
Bridal-wreath all waiting
By my open door,
Ivy draping red walls
Screening sparrow's nests,
Green lawns ruled by robins
Vain of their red breasts.
How I love the hedges
With their yellow bloom,
Honeysuckle pale pink
Wafting its perfume!
Purple-cloaked the iris
Visits us again.
Tulips lifting gold cups
Catch the silver rain.
Gardens seem like patched quilts
With a pattern rare,
Tints and shades assembled
By some fingers fair.
You, Spring, bid us flaunt the
Patches brightly dyed,
Winter frowns and makes us
Turn the plain white side.

LILACS

Enchanting fragrance sates the morning breeze
Like incense from some eastern temple fanned.
The rising sun's warm, golden beams expand
Elixir sweet, athwart my lilac trees,
Where robins gay with song pay lodging fees.
At open door in ecstacy I stand.
For what surpasses this in any land,—
Lilacs in perfumed mass for my heart's ease?

Forgotten now is winter's dread confine
With ice and chill, or prairie dust-storms' roil.
My garden is a paradise divine,
Surmounting obstacles of clime and soil.
These proudly-tossing purple plumes are mine,—
A victor's guerdon for long hours of toil.

BIRDS

Because it was sweet tulip time,
When Spring's lute plays a silver chime,
And Nature's verse is lyric rhyme
 Atuned with God,

I closed a deal in real estate,—
Two houses brought with much elate.
All shiny, neat, and up-to-date.
 For couples two.

I hung out no "For Renting" sign.
The Press got no announcement line,
I wondered just, if tenants fine,
 Perchance, might come.

And now while at my window wide,
With lilac scent on either side,
Old jolly Sol from his high ride
 Gave me a wink.

And I perceived with silent glee.
Atop the roofs for all to see,
Two bridal pairs,—unknown to me,—
 Had chosen homes.

Such saucy jazz they sang to me,
Then sweet bewitching rhapsody,
And last a plaintive minor key,
 To win my heart.

Just little birds that chance along,
Can cheer us with their hearty song,
And lead us with a faith more strong,
 Nearer to God.

A JUNE DREAM

At the east of my house I a garden have made,
And I dreamed there to-day in the afternoon shade,
While the twitt'ring of birds and the droning of bees,
Gently lulled me to sleep, softly fanned by the breeze.

Then I reigned like a queen, in my garden, alone,
For my big swinging seat was a canopied throne,
And the straight solemn rows of the maple trees tall,
Were the queen's noble yeomen in royalty's hall.

Now an emerald rug was the grass at my feet,
Where the ladies assembled, their ruler to greet,
Flower borders each side were the galleries for dames,
And with bowing and smiling they called out their names.

There were tall, stately blondes each in trailing white gown,
And demure little mammas in purple and brown,
In such pink, frilly dresses came débutantes shy,
While the roguish brunettes decked in scarlet passed by.

Quite a wonderful fête was this June court of mine,
Which I held there to-day, with the weather so fine,
And my colorful ladies in perfumed attire,
Were the sweetest of subjects a queen could desire.

TO A BUTTERFLY

O butterfly, you lovely butterfly!
Why have you happiness, and why not I?
On golden wings you soar the sunbeams through.
Would that I could but change my lot with you.

You flit in joy amid the nectared flowers
Within my wealthy neighbor's fragrant bowers.
And sense no care, no pain, no haunting dream.—
On happy quest a fairly spirit seem.

I knew a time when I, too, danced away
In pretty frocks, with life supremely gay
He called me oft his merry butterfly,
How could such love as his grow cold and die?

JULY FOURTEENTH

Wee Nan a birthday had to-day.
And she received, from far away,
A gay and stylish pleasure yacht
Which so delighted us we thought
It quite the grandest thing we'd seen,
When we undid the wrappers green.
I knew that ship must soon depart
But did not know just how to start.

Its sails were formed of ginger bread
On candy masts, so round and red.
With chocolate the deck was laid,
And anchor, flag, all sugar made.
Stored in the hold was peppermint,
Which was, I thought, a clever hint
That there could be no storm at all
When our yacht sailed for port-of-call.

A CHINESE STORE

So low and dim, with incense hung—
This treasure house of Lee Whang Chung,
Who folds his arms, benignly smiles,
As I browse down entrancing aisles,
For each thing here, to my alarm,
Beguiles me like a witch's charm.
From painted lanterns overhead
To gorgeous silks that lie outspread,
Brocaded coats so soft and fine,
Embroidered shawls of rare design.

I thrill to chests all pearl inlaid.
The beads of turquoise, amber, jade,
Each dainty tea set, cloisonné jar,
A box of carven cinnabar,
Glass tinkling bells, chairs lacquered red,
Teak tables quaint with dragons spread,
Such trays and candlesticks of brass,
The gilded gods that stand en masse.
This place holds my enchanted gaze
Like candy shops of childhood days.

THE CENSURED NATION

Say not she was too frivolous, or base,
A scarlet courtesan with painted face
Who, drugged with wine, deemed it no dire disgrace
To yield onto her neighbor's mad embrace.

Say not she was too weak, too easy won,
Bewildered at the claim of bomb and gun,—
For lust or greed she pacified Cain's son
And left to stouter hearts the task undone.

Say not she was corrupt, deceitful, vain,
That mother's sons for her were needless slain.
Some men have erred, been shrived, and stood again
On noble heights they erstwhile did attain.

Just say some day she will be praised anew,
And all her sons will gallant be, and true,—
Will loyally the cause of Right pursue,
When Time her heart with courage does imbue.

IN THE PARK

You idle swans just pecking water flies,
Snow-white, arch-necked, with funny yellow feet
That paddle swift to this old garden seat,
Where silently, with little beady eyes,
You halt to peer at me in faked surprise.
Do yellow-sandaled feet and white frock neat.
Make me, as well, a swan you wish to greet?
Ah, surely not, you are so much too wise.

You noticed I was lunching out to-day,
And came to envy me at every bite.
Who told you that, perchance, I was to take
Guests such as you, this pleasant time in May?
For pie and cake whence comes your appetite.
You artful swans upon this sun-lit lake?



TO A DOVE

(Quatorzain.)

A flash of white beneath a wind-swept cloud
That ends a day of tempest, hail and rain,
You soar as some fair flag of truce, endowed,
To tell me sun will surely smile again.
Your silver plumage gleams, a beacon ray
The heavens wide to search, while in the west
Her sombre cloak of storm is dropped by Day
To show a crimson dress, at Eve's behest.

Perchance you'll travel star-lit skies tonight
And bear beneath your wing some note of peace
To soldiers waiting a command to fight
Perchance you'll speed to earth when God shall cease
The gale, the lashing sea, the thunder's roll,
And bring the olive branch to some tired soul.

LOVE'S TOKEN.

He stooped and picked a flower
And placed it in my hand,
With feeling in those dear brown eyes
I well could understand.

My grandson was but seven,
His gift a wild blue bell,
But orchid or a dew-tipped rose
No more of love could tell.

YES OR NO

What would you do, now, if you were me
In quaint old inn here beside the sea,
'Mid gardens fair all about the place,
With batchelor-buttons to Queen-Anne's lace?

My room is high on a corner tall
Where squirrels can climb up the old stone wall,
The east in shade of a cedar tree,
The south an oak of a century.

I saw by chance gay old Sol arise,
The moon so full that he winked his eyes,
But nothing gave to me such a shock
As bells they clanged just at six o'clock.

"Dear rise, Dear rise", I could hear one side,
But, "Take it easy" another cried,
One bird gray-vested with coat of blue,
One bright with plumage of yellow hue.

So what to do here beside the sea
Is quite a problem that vexes me,—
To miss my breakfast, and stay in bed,
Or wander forth with a sleepy head.

THE BLIND

Thank God that I could one time see
The beauty that He planned for me—
That now in memory I can view
Entrancing scenes in form and hue:

A sparkling sun on sapphire sea,
The golden sand tides leave for me.
Rare opal tints in curled sea-shells,
Orchids and ferns in dewy dells,

Dark ivy on cathedral walls,
The silver spray from water falls,
Pink blossoms 'neath an azure sky
And pastures green where white sheep lie,

Mist wreathing hills at break of dawn,
Bronze peacocks strutting down the lawn,
In ripened wheat red poppies tall,
The maples all a-flame in Fall.

A snowfall on a cedar tree,
Red sun through trees' black filigree.
White sea gulls wheeling near and far,
A sickle moon and one bright star.

Thank God for years when we could see
And fill our minds exquisitely
With pictures fair, He gave to men,
And see them now as we did then.

A SOUTHERN BEACH

There's a southern beach that is hard to reach
Where waves sweep in a-roaring.
Where the crags are steep and the waters deep,
And white gulls go a-soaring;
But it's twice a day that a tide gives way
To sands all white and steaming.
Where there lies a cove that I'm wont to rove,
'Mid opal shells a-gleaming.

'Twas a morning fair as I loitered there,
With sunrise on the border,
That a sparkling sea hinted not to me
Of death or of disorder.
So I cried in fright at a fearsome sight,
And crossed myself in prayer.
For a corpse lay pale on the broken shale,
With weed-entangled hair.

Now a taper white glimmers day and night,
In little chapel yonder,
On the fate of maid, whom in grave they laid,
The seamen often ponder.
For her name and race no one yet can trace,
In bridal dress she's sleeping.
And an unknown soul is on my bead-roll,
While God a watch is keeping.

A PRAIRIE EVENING

The trail is but a ribbon brown
A-waving up, a-waving down,
And stretching on from town to town,
The prairie wide a-trimming.

To right and left is yellow field
Of ripened wheat, which soon will yield
Itself in coin, and serve to shield,
From poverty, the settler.

The sun retires in robe of red
With gayest curtains overhead,
While Luna wakes on eastern bed—
A harvest moon all golden.

Aloft gray geese honk in the sky,
And wild ducks sport on lakes nearby.
While coyotes call their nightly cry
In yonder echoing hills.

My little shack looks good to me;
A homesteader I'm glad to be;
Who then would have a Family Tree.
Or palaces of Princes?

I have renounced all pomp and creed;
I'm stranger now to spite and greed;
Here have I found just what I need,
In Canada—blest country.

NATURE

(SCENT)

I love the breath of blossoms fair
That in their seasons blow,
The fragrant pine and cedar trees
Aligned in stately row;
And dear to me,—the ocean-born,—
Is tang of salt sea air
When fog creeps up about the land
And hangs its blanket there.
Who does not covet teasing scent
Of fruit, the long year through,
The Balm-in-Gilead when it droops
All heavy with the dew?

(SOUND)

I love the tapping of the rain
Upon my cottage low,
The chiming pebbles in a brook,
The sea's dirge, solemn, slow;
And sweet is Spring's caressing breeze
Amid the new green grass,
The music when through ripened corn
October breezes pass.
But though I love the rhapsodies
The birds come here to sing,
More thrilled I am when through the hills
The thunder echoes ring.

(COLOR)

I love a tree's black filigree
Against the west's red glow,
A golden sun, a silver moon,
The white of untracked snow,
The crimson, yellow, russet-brown,
When Autumn paints the leaves,
The eerie light in forests tall,
The gold in harvest sheaves.
Each passing month throughout the year
Unfolds its tinted flowers,
From violets to holly red,
Through June's rose-tinted bowers.

DRIFTING

I'm drifting with the tide, Louise,
From land far out to sea;
The mystery of mysteries
Will soon be known to me.

As gulls that flit the waters o'er,
Or fleets put out to sea,
So I must follow those before,
Alone and fearlessly.

The west is bright with crimson light
And crimson is the sea,
And out where tide and sky unite
Will you be waiting me?

Shall I then learn the secret deep
You know and cannot tell?
Is death but an eternal sleep.
A paradise, or hell?



AN EARLY FROST

This morning there is ice upon
The birds' bath sitting on the lawn.
And all the grass is hid from me
Beneath a frost's fine filigree.

The vines that drape the old brick wall
Are like my mother's scarlet shawl,
And every tree has shed its gown
Of yellow, green, or russet-brown.

My gardens seem a spectral land,
Save where some zinnias bravely stand
With asters, in the sheltered spots,
Mid pansies in great purple blots.

Their feathers ruffled in the chill
The sparrows line each window-sill,
And in a gentle minor key
They twitter down complaints to me.

So I the water warm shall make
And of my crumbs they may partake,
For who would be a robber, bold,
And baths and daily bread withhold?

THE SUN'S LAUNDRY

The tired old Sun has gone to bed
With all his wash strung overhead.

He leaves it out for hours and hours,
But takes it down when e'er it showers.

The shirts are purple, pink and blue,
Pyjamas have a yellow hue.

While hankies are amazing clean
With big, plaid socks hung in between.

The Sun's wash is the gayest sight
To hang out every pleasant night,
But p'raps I should more modest be
And jest not at his lingerie.



MY PORCH

A table with an orange cloth to hold
A plate of fudge, or apples in a bowl,
Gay cushioned chairs, and when I'm very tired
An easy couch and afghan is my goal.
A rug of blue and brown is on the floor
And on the shelves the plants that I adore.

So here I rest in sunshine or in rain,
In what was once Grandmother's rocking-chair.
I read a bit and plan my war-time work,
Or hear a friend discuss a joy or care
While knitting socks, or patching some bright quilt,
Within this porch that my good man has built.

My little porch, all circumscribed with glass,
Through which I view each flower, shrub and tree.
Sleek, jaunty robins pecking on the lawn
And passing neighbors who smile in at me.
High soaring planes . . . men in uniform,
And yonder beacon light in calm and storm.

AT SANDBANKS

Bluebells and scarlet columbine,
White yarrow mid sweet grasses,
Basswood a-flower and cedars green
Bow as the cool wind passes.

And at my feet the waters blue
The shelving shale keep lapping,
While sun-tipped wings of circling gulls
Maintain their ceaseless flapping.

Then black in Eve's rose-tinted sky
Each swallow fast comes homing,
Could that I, too, find rest and peace,
My spirit cease its roaming.

Could that our griefs, like kites, have wings
To bear them 'cross the ocean,
Could that the beauty of this day
Bind up a heart that's broken.

REINCARNATION

("If a Man Die Shall He Live Again?" Job 14:14)

I am not dead when I shall pass
Beyond this planet's rim.
But just quiescent I must bide
Until at call from Him,

I shall emerge from Spirit Land,
And don again once more
A mortal form, and fill a place
On some appointed shore.

To aid at His command, maybe,
Some great predestined plan,
But what it is, or where it is,
Is not for me to scan.

If I have used my talents here
And done each duty well,
Shall I attain exalted rank
Within that realm to dwell?

Then if I have through envy, greed,
Or indolence done ill,
Some menial serf I may become,
But it will be God's will.

Who labours long beneath a yoke
Of toil and grief and strife,
Must know he shirked his given task
Within some former life.

OCTOBER

Umber, crimson, gold of fallen leaves,
Yellow stubble, ghost of garnered sheaves,
Pumpkins, orange, 'mong the shocks of corn,
Ragged scarecrows standing all forlorn,
Scarlet berries, acorns, aster flowers,
Purple grapes festooning latticed bowers,
Wild geese honking southward overhead,
Pine trees black against a sky of red,
Windows flashing back the sunset rays,
Woods and hills enveloped in a haze,
Curling smoke above the city there,
Scent of jams and pickles on the air,
Luna, fair, ascending in the east,—
Queen presiding o'er the Autumn feast.

FROST

The vines have used a garish rouge
Along the old brick gables.
And drifting down across the lawn
Gleam golden leaves from maples.

I loitered in the garden walks
To greet the well-known faces.
But here and there I saw old friends
All dead within their places.

Snap dragons, still, I chanced to find,
And now and then an aster,
Some phlox, and many pansies, too,
That had escaped disaster.

But dark clouds scurried 'cross the sky,
A wet wind whipped the hedges,
And sparrows piped a sad complaint
Down from the window ledges.

I shivered, too, with Autumn's chill,
My heart it seemed was haunted;
The ghosts of pleasures gone were there,
The Summer back, I wanted.

CHRISTMAS 1942

Can Christmas bells be heard above
The sirens' warning noise?
Will tinselled trees stand tall and proud
Bedecked with shining toys?

Will Yule-tide carols still be sung
Adown each village street,
Or can these people think of aught
But just some safe retreat?

Now where can orphaned little ones
Find mantels for their socks,
When many erstwhile happy homes
A pile of debris mocks?

Gone is the parish church where I
Would keep a Christmas tryst;
I know not where to kneel and pray
And glorify the Christ.

And yet I sense without a doubt
That God is in His Heaven,
And all this sorrow, sin and woe
Is but the world to leaven.



MOTHER

My guiding light has gone—
My true lode star.
Golden sun. silver moon.
Have set afar.

The lighthouse lamp is dark
And never more,
Across the sea of life,
Its beam will pour.

How can I hold the path.
Through doubt and fear,
If you must smile elsewhere
And I am here?

I've never lacked the torch
Of mother love,
Till they called you to-day,
To realms above.